

In addition to the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan update and the developments in Jackson discussed on previous pages, the Conservation Alliance keeps an eye on numerous other community planning

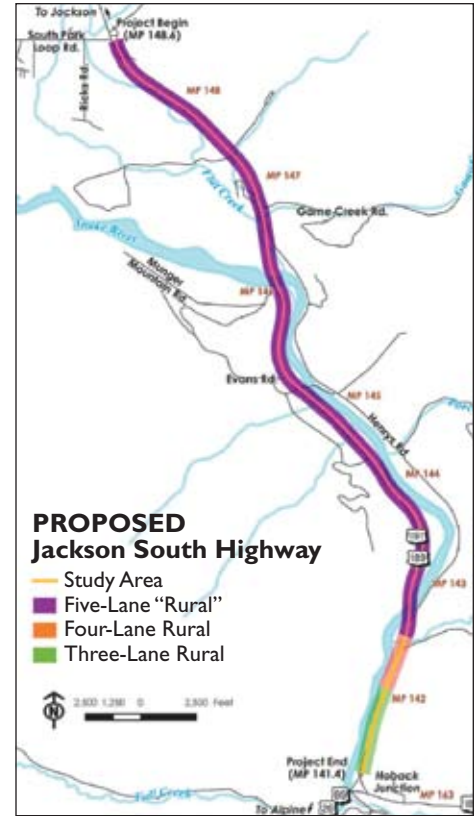
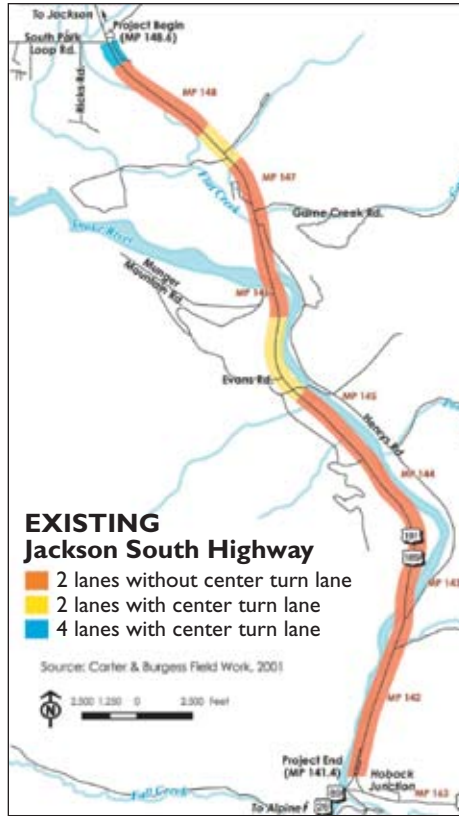
matters affecting our valley. We've outlined some of the major ones below; please visit www.jhalliance.org/allianceaction.htm, or contact Kristy Bruner at (307) 733-9417 or Kristy@jhalliance.org for updates.

Life in the fast lane

The “Jackson South” draft environmental impact statement for the 7-mile section of Hwy. 26/89/189/191 from southern South Park Loop Road to Hoback Junction was released on Jan. 7. The two disappointing action alternatives in the DEIS both call for building five lanes of road, and differ only in a one-mile section. Both alternatives cause concerns regarding wildlife, habitat connectivity and community character. Six miles of 5-lane road will fragment habitat and increase hazards for animals (not to mention motorists) moving through the valley, although the DEIS does note the possibility of including structures to help mitigate these problems.

From the time this project was first proposed many years ago, the Conservation Alliance has strongly opposed making the highway five lanes wide, given the impacts it would have on wildlife and community character. (We have supported a modified 3-lane alternative.) Our public comments are available at www.jhalliance.org/library.htm#comments.

You may submit written comments to the Wyoming Department of Transportation by March 9 via email at Hobackcomments@dot.state.wy.us.



WYDOT is proposing two alternatives for reconstructing the 7-mile stretch of highway south of Jackson – the one at right above, and one that’s five lanes the whole way. The Jackson South DEIS is available online at <http://dot.state.wy.us/Default.jsp?sCode=jsdei>.

Moratorium on big residential subdivisions extended

On Feb. 17, after discussing that the Comprehensive Plan update process would probably take longer than originally thought, the Teton Board of County Commissioners voted to extend a moratorium on large residential subdivisions to Sept. 1. While our community figures out how to plan for responsible growth, this moratorium provides relief from development pressures that could otherwise compromise the process. (At the time of the moratorium’s adoption in May 2008, the county was facing upzone proposals that could have put about 1,000 more homes in South Park alone.) The freeze applies only to parcels larger than 20 acres, where it bans the use of planned unit developments for affordable housing, planned residential developments, and any zoning changes that would increase the number of homes from what is allowed by right.

County OKs environmental assessments amendment

Also on Feb. 17, county commissioners passed a text amendment to the land development regulations that requires the county to choose the consultants who conduct environmental assessments for intermediate and major development applications. (Developers are still required to pay for the studies.) Previously, developers hired and paid consultants to do assessments required for certain projects (such as those within the Natural Resource Overlay), which could lead to biased studies. This amendment is a step in the right direction to help avert potential conflicts of interest.

Town passes condominium conversion rules

In December, after months of discussion, the Jackson Town Council approved a text amendment governing apartment-to-condo conversions. Converting affordable rentals to high-priced condos worsens our workforce housing shortage, and at this point, it’s not clear to what extent the new regulations will work to limit such conversions of large apartment complexes that were originally approved based on their function as rentals. Under the new rules, these complexes are required to go through a change of use application, and owners who convert properties will now have to mitigate the impact of the conversion on housing affordability (albeit at only a 15 percent rate).

County, town discuss long-range workforce housing

In an encouraging move, on Feb. 9, town and county officials approved a Teton County Housing Authority proposal to establish a committee of community stakeholders to help develop a long-range workforce housing strategy for Jackson Hole. One of the goals being considered for the Comp Plan update is to keep the percentage of the valley’s workforce who live locally at 65 percent or more, but achieving this will take commitment. For instance, county commissioners passed amendments in 2007 to increase affordable housing mitigation rates for new residential developments from 15 to 25 percent, but town councilors have yet to enact similar amendments. We’ll keep you posted on this issue; meanwhile, see the links at www.jhalliance.org/issuescompplan.htm for background.

Source: Wyoming Department of Transportation